

International Taxation and Regional Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities for Asia

A Conference by

Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability and Financial Transparency Coalition

March 29 - 30 | Hotel Vivanta by Taj – Ambassador | Sujan Singh Park (Near Khan Market), New Delhi

Detailed Agenda

Day One (March 29):

9:30 – 10:00 Registration

10:00 – 11:15 Opening Session

Welcome and Introduction

Subrat Das (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, India)

Sarah Bracht Vaugeois (Financial Transparency Coalition)

Keynote Address: *Akhilesh Ranjan* (Foreign Tax and Tax Research Division, Ministry of Finance and Competent Authority on International Taxation, Government of India)

Chair: *Praveen Jha* (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India)

11:15 – 11:30 Coffee / Tea

11:30 – 1:00 Illicit Financial Flows and Perspectives from Developing Countries

Over the past half century, the shadow financial system has grown more complex, and the tools to hide and move money undetected have proliferated. Whether it's through anonymous companies or tax havens, illicit financial flows—money that is illegally earned, transferred or utilized – now amount to over \$1 trillion flowing out of developing countries each year. This session will focus on the issue of illicit financial flows and its corrosive effects on developing countries, and new research to crack down on them.

Chair: *Lincoln Marais* (African Tax Administration Forum)

Speakers:

G. Sampath (The Hindu, India)

Jessica Portocarrero (The Latin American Network on Debt, Development and Rights)

Mae Buenaventura (Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development)

Sayed Ikram Afzali (Integrity Watch Afghanistan)

1:00 – 2:00 Lunch

2:00 – 3:30 Offshore Wealth, Anonymous Companies and Exchange of Information: Challenges for Developing Countries

Estimates suggest that about \$7.6 trillion of global wealth is held offshore and about \$21 - \$32 trillion has been invested virtually tax free through tax havens or secrecy jurisdictions. The secrecy offered by some jurisdictions makes it more difficult for governments to identify assets held by its citizens abroad. The issue is further complicated by anonymous companies which can hold assets and own property, without the true human owners (or beneficial owners) being recognized. The tax information exchange standard has seen a shift globally in the last two years, with Automatic Exchange of Information being adopted by more and more countries. Speakers in this session would focus on the challenges for developing countries with regard to offshore assets, secrecy jurisdictions and exchange of information for tax purposes.

Chair: *Arun Kumar* (Formerly with Jawaharlal Nehru University, India)

Speakers:

Andres Knobel (Tax Justice Network)

Moran Harari (Tax Justice Network - Israel)

Suraj Jaiswal (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, India)

3:30 – 4:00 Coffee / Tea

4:00 – 5:30 Addressing Tax Dodging by Multi-National Corporations: Looking Beyond BEPS

The issue of multi-national corporations not paying their fair share of taxes has been disproportionately affecting developing countries for decades. Transfer mispricing and profit shifting by MNCs result in a loss of crucial revenue critical for financing development. At the other end of the spectrum, MNCs systemically invest time and resources in tax planning. This session would bring together diverse views on tax planning and tax dodging by MNCs, transfer pricing and examine to what extent the recommendations put forward by the OECD BEPS initiative would address these issues.

Chair: *Francisco J. Beiner* (Inter American Center of Tax Administrations)

Speakers:

Ashutosh Dikshit (BMR Advisors, India)

Crystal Simeoni (Tax Justice Network - Africa)

D.P. Sengupta (National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, India)

Day Two (March 30):**9:30 – 11:00 Raising Domestic Resources in an Age of Tax Incentives**

Domestic resource mobilization is key to ensuring that developing countries have sustainable revenue for public spending for social protection and development interventions across sectors. However, tax exemptions and tax incentives can make it difficult to establish predictable and sustainable tax bases. Asian countries also often engage in tax competition to attract business investment. This session will bring together perspectives on tax systems and the factors motivating and concerns regarding tax concessions in and tax competition between countries.

Chair: *Vinod Vyasulu* (Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, India)

Speakers:

Ah Maftuchan (Perkumpulan Prakarsa, Indonesia)

Anton Ragos (Action for Economic Reforms, Philippines)

Biswajit Dhar (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India)

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee / Tea

11:15 – 1:00 Perspectives from Asia: Experiences on Taxation and Financial Transparency Issues

Asian countries face differentiated issues pertaining to taxation and financial transparency. Most countries in Asia have lower tax-GDP ratios than countries in Europe, the Americas and the Middle East, with a greater emphasis on indirect taxation. Speakers from the FTC Asia Network would share their national experiences on taxation, illicit financial flows and their perspectives on regional cooperation in the Asian context.

Moderator: *Neeti Biyani* (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, India)

Speakers:

Mae Buenaventura (Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development)

Ming Zhuang (Participation Center, China)

Sayed Ikram Afzali (Integrity Watch Afghanistan)

Towfiq Khan (Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh)

Wahyudi Thohary (Transparency International Indonesia)

1:00 – 2:00 Lunch

2:00 – 3:30 Addressing Loopholes in International Taxation: What Is the Role for Regional Cooperation?

The year 2015 saw some important changes in the rules for global finance – the Third Financing for Development Conference, the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, and the OECD Base Erosion and Profit Shifting project established a number of norms and standards for the global financial architecture. This session would have perspectives from the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF), Inter American Center of Tax Administrations (CIAT) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) on regional cooperation in Africa, Latin America and Asia respectively. Speakers would also discuss the relevance of regional cooperation in tax matters in Asia.

Chair: *Sachin Chaturvedi* (Research and Information System for Developing Countries, India)

Speakers:

Francisco J. Beiner (Inter American Center of Tax Administrations)

Lincoln Marias (African Tax Administration Forum)

Nagesh Kumar (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific)

3:30 – 4:00 Coffee / Tea

4:00 – 5:15 Closing Session

Moderator: *Subrat Das* (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, India)

Speakers:

Paranjay Guha Thakurta (Journalist, Author and Documentary Filmmaker, India)

Sarah Bracht Vaugeois (Financial Transparency Coalition)

Vinod Vyasulu (Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, India)

5:15 – 5:30 Vote of Thanks